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Milpitas City Leaders Solicit Community Feedback on PG&E's "Pipeline Pathways" Tree Removal Program

Opportunity for Citizens to Comment on Proposal at November 3rd City Council Meeting

Milpitas, California – The City of Milpitas is requesting community input on PG&E's proposed "Pipeline Pathways" project, which could potentially impact a variety of mature trees and vegetation around the City.

The City is encouraging the public to attend the November 3rd City Council Meeting at which PG&E will present its proposal. Public comment is encouraged by the City Council. The meeting will take place at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

"The safety of our citizens is a top priority for Milpitas. PG&E will work with the City and the community to resolve any impacts to our neighborhoods associated with the removal of trees," said Bill Ekern, Milpitas Director of Planning and Neighborhood Services. "Ultimately, we want our citizens to participate in the balancing of safety and aesthetics."

In July 2015, PG&E submitted its original proposal which included the removal of and mitigation for a considerable amount of trees and vegetation throughout the City of Milpitas. PG&E advised City staff that they had a federal compliance deadline to complete the work by December 31, 2015. The proposal would remove trees from residents' backyards and several of the City's green spaces, including City landscaped street medians.

With approximately 15,456 trees and over 50 common species in Milpitas, the City's trees and foliage are an important part of the community's character. In addition to their beauty, the City's trees can lower utility bills by providing shade to cool homes in the summer, as well as a buffer from cold winds in the winter. Trees help filter dust and pollution from the air and provide a habitat for local birds and wildlife. Additionally, trees may add as much as 20% to the value of Milpitas homes if properly maintained.

In 2007, the community became one of 3,400 cities in the country to be certified as a “Tree City” through the Arbor Day Foundation’s program by meeting four core standards of urban forestry management: maintaining a tree board or department, having a community tree ordinance, spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry and celebrating Arbor Day.

“Many of the trees PG&E proposes to remove have been around for decades,” Ekern said. “Obviously, the loss of mature trees is not desirable for the City, which is why the discussion of scope and timing with the community is important.”

The \$500 million Pipeline Pathways project is a statewide initiative to clear obstructions from the utility company's 6,750 miles of gas lines from Bakersfield to Eureka. PG&E needs to remove the trees, shrubs and structures on private and public property to ensure pipeline safety. The project began in response to the California Public Utility Commission’s (CPUC) concerns following the 2010 gas pipeline explosion in San Bruno.